



Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: August 12, 2020.

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes.

Members in Attendance: Wayne Chouinard, Lenard Diggins, Chuck Giroux, Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis, Howard Muise, Tycho Nightingale, Corey Rateau, Scott Smith, Laura Swan.

Members Missing: Aravind Basavapathruni, Daniel Amstutz.

Members of Public in Attendance: Don Seltzer, Jacob Deck, Ann LeRoyer, Paul Schlichtman, Thomas Proctor, Jo Anne Preston

1. Administration.

Howard Muise, the Chair, read the script for remotely conducted meetings, referred the members to the agenda attachment entitled "Governor Charles Baker's 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law," and announced that the meeting was being recorded. The minutes of the July 8, 2020 meeting were approved on a roll call vote.

The Chair noted that correspondence had been received from Jenny Raitt, Director, Department of Planning and Community Development, requesting review of the traffic analysis for a hotel proposed in Arlington Heights, to which an answer was needed by the previous week. A working group consisting of Howard Muise, Jeff Maxtutis, Tycho Nightingale, Scott Smith, and Dan Amstutz was convened to perform the review. The memorandum summarizing the review was included in the agenda packet for the current meeting.

Two TAC members are leaving the group: Chuck Giroux and Ky Bertoli. Interviews will be conducted next week for the two openings.

2. Public Comments.

Len Diggins said that he received a letter in his capacity as a member of the Select Board from East Arlington resident, Rachel Stark, requesting that walk signals return to automatic recall so they come up every signal cycle. Wayne Chouinard reported that all the signals on Mass Ave. and

Broadway were changed to automatic recall for several months during the beginning of the pandemic, but they have since been returned to push-button actuation, as per pre-COVID conditions, after discussing it with the Town Manager and DPW Director.

3. Town Issues/Activities

a. Wayne Chouinard provided updates from the Department of Public Works:

There has been a road construction milestone with completion of Bacon and Central Streets.

The resurfacing of Morningside/Old Mystic will take place in the fall.

The Lake Street/Bikeway traffic signal project is moving forward with expected completion at the end of August.

Curb sidewalk around the cemetery is under way.

As part of the sidewalk project in Arlington Center to replace the existing red brick sidewalks, work has been completed on several sidewalk sections, including Broadway east of Franklin Street.

A lingering issue with the Mystic/Summer traffic signal is the power connection. Difficulty in coordination with Eversource has been resolved. New equipment is being installed in the controller. A consistent power source will be underground and the work will be done before winter.

b. Corey Rateau provided an update from the Police Department:

PaybyPhone (mobile parking payment) integration for parking meters is in progress. It's been difficult because much of the PaybyPhone staff is in Canada but the ticket writing company (Cardinal) is in Texas. Most issues have been resolved. Meter parking still is suspended in the Town center. There is not currently a schedule to restore meter operations.

4. Discussion of the Proposed Mass Ave. Hotel (Working Group)

A memo was prepared by a working group consisting of Howard Muise, Jeff Maxtutis, Tycho Nightingale, Dan Amstutz, and Scott Smith. The memo has been sent to Jenny Raitt, Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development Director, who will forward it to the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB). The working group reviewed the

impact and assessment study for the hotel and site plans. The hotel's application did not include a traffic reduction plan.

The impact and assessment study concluded that vehicle traffic can be accommodated, although the impact is not negligible. The TAC working group's recommendations differ from the overall conclusion of the applicant's traffic study that no mitigation is necessary. The report notes that there are safety issues at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue at Appleton Street and Appleton Place based on MassDOT crash data. It is standard practice in traffic impact reports for the applicant's traffic engineer to identify potential mitigation measures for deficient locations impacted by a proposed project. The working group recommended that the ARB ask the applicant to provide some assistance in identifying potential improvements at the Mass Ave/Appleton Street/Appleton Place intersection.

The proposed parking supply consists of 24 tandem parking spaces under the building. The assessment didn't include an analysis of parking supply versus demand. Is the proposed parking supply sufficient? The assessment mentions eight additional tandem spaces, but whether there is sufficient space on the site was not demonstrated.

At the northeast corner of the Mass Ave/Clark St. intersection, the existing ramp is not ADA-compliant and the working group recommended that the applicant provide an ADA-compliant ramp. The Clark St. sidewalk adjacent to the project site is in poor condition and the applicant should repair it. Jeff Maxtutis noted that Clark St. is a private way and the applicant has jurisdiction to make the recommended improvement. The plan for the hotel includes a semi-circular driveway with a sidewalk on the west side but not on the east side. The plan should be revised to include a walkway on the east side for hotel pedestrians going to and from Mass Ave to the east or the bike rack. The applicant should be required to provide handicap ramps on all sidewalk approaches to the hotel.

Don Seltzer said that he agreed with the TAC's comments on the report, adding his opinion that the circular driveway is extremely steep and doesn't meet state requirements for a level area. The 5° slope makes it hard for a car to exit the driveway and most cars won't be able to get over the driveway hump. The 6' retaining wall on Clark Street obstructs drivers exiting the hotel parking from seeing pedestrians on the sidewalk.

The 52 peak hour vehicular trips projected to be generated by the hotel exceed current traffic volumes from the site because the DAV has been closed since 2014. Scott Smith added that because hotel guest parking will be valet-only, there actually will be double the forecast traffic

volumes on adjacent roadways. Corey Rateau noted that there are no existing counts for the hotel site.

Jacob Deck said that the report doesn't address nearby bus stops. A lot of people will be taking the route 77 bus. There is no crosswalk now directly from the proposed hotel property to the bus stop on the opposite side of Mass Ave. Howard Muise said he doesn't think there are a lot of bus riders at this location but the report doesn't specify how many there are or will be.

As for parking supply and demand, the June 20th letter provided by Jennifer Raitt indicates that ten additional spaces for the hotel employee parking will be provided at the Ottoson School and 1289 Mass Ave, but this is not mentioned in the report. Bicycle counts taken in February are not discussed in body of the report. The report should identify bicycle and pedestrian safety issues. Jeff Maxtutis noted that the memorandum from the working group asked for consideration of additional street trees – the plans show only two trees – to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Tycho Nightingale said that the only way to get to the Ottoson is to go through a difficult intersection and that 1289 Mass Ave is across Lowell Street from the hotel site. The spaces at Ottoson and 1289 Mass will be for employees and will not be used for valet service.

In terms of mitigation, the Town has a standard list of traffic reduction items that are commonly considered for every development project, such as subsidized transit passes and bicycle parking.

Ann LeRoyer, a resident of Peirce Street, behind the proposed hotel site, asked if the applicants still were talking about tour buses. Howard Muise responded that the recent letter to the ARB says that they are not. Wayne Chouinard said that public comments on the plan should go directly to ARB. Another question is how trash and delivery trucks will affect walking, including pedestrian access to the hotel. Crosswalks now are very awkward and it's hard to cross Mass Ave. Children run across the street. Perhaps additional crosswalks are needed.

5. Arlington High School (Howard Muise)

Howard Muise reported that the TAC review's work is in progress. The working group hopes to meet next week to finalize its review memo.

6. Appleton St/Appleton Pl/Mass Ave (Wayne Chouinard)

Wayne reported that Public Works is looking for "low hanging fruit" as short-term safety improvements. He had no news about the formation of

the design review committee. Corey Rateau said that the recent left-turn restriction enforced by APD is being maintained and will start at 5:00 PM as natural lighting changes with the timing of the sunset.

Scott asked if the design review committee had met; Howard Muise reported TAC hasn't been requested to provide a member. He will follow up with the Town Manager. Scott noted that there are a few simple things that can be done.

Thomas Proctor said he spoke last week with the Town Manager, who said he's hoping to convene the first meeting by the end of month. It's a good idea to nominate a TAC representative to the committee.

7. Thompson School Traffic Calming (Laura Swan/Scott Smith)

Laura Swan reported that the School Committee voted to open schools in a hybrid mode (partial in-person and partial remote learning). There will be much lower attendance and numbers of people traveling to and from school than usual. Twenty-five percent of parents want just remote learning. Students at Thompson who have opted for in-person teaching will be split with half attending Mondays and Tuesdays and half attending Thursdays and Fridays. Wednesday will be reserved for remote learning, teacher professional development and planning. Any traffic or pedestrian counts or observations will be lower than under normal circumstances. Speed remains a factor on N. Union and Everett Streets and the TAC can study existing speeds. Laura will be meeting with the school Principal the next day. The big question is, is it possible to figure out what a full attendance, typical school year day would be like? Does the Town have methodology to project normal levels of traffic? Eventually there will be 500 students going back to school as normal. Jeff replied that the State has a methodology for projecting traffic volumes based on 2014 numbers, but he does not believe they are applicable to this case.

Scott Smith said that some of the signs recommended from the 2010 report are missing, including the school zone sign on Everett St, and the Town should replace these signs. He will follow up with Wayne Chouinard. Len Diggins asked if the Town is allowed to do automatic ticketing. Rateau said it was not legal in Massachusetts. Muise noted the playground adjacent to the school is under construction. A new path is being added from south side of the playground to North Union St. and may affect pedestrian patterns. Muise noted that the playground is expected to be in operation in the fall. The start of school will be delayed start until Sept. 21st because of the pandemic.

Cory Rateau noted that consistency is required in data and that data collected on different days would lack consistency, potentially compromising the quality of data. Wednesday is atypical. Scott said that we should be sure to capture conditions on Tuesday and Thursday. Speed and not volume data should be collected. Measuring commuter traffic is important, too, but we don't know how representative this fall will be.

8. Chestnut St. Traffic (Wayne Chouinard)

Jo Anne Preston asked what to do about the crosswalk. Wayne replied that he has no new information. Wayne said we could conduct an informal study of how people cross Chestnut Street, but would face the same problem as with Thompson School, in terms of activity not being representative of normal conditions. Seniors are not going out due to COVID. Rateau noted that one item that is being followed up on is to paint "Do Not Block Intersection" markings at the intersection of Chestnut Street and Chestnut Terrace, which TAC had recommended previously.

9. Appleton St./Park Ave.

Muise noted that the intersection meets warrants for a traffic signal; the next step is to get an engineer to analyze the volumes we collected and to look at the three intersections on Park Ave from Mass Ave to Florence St. He asked Wayne if money is available to hire a consultant to do the analysis. Wayne replied that DPW may have some consultant funding, but it was important to also see what may happen with Mass Ave and Appleton, as improvements there should be coordinated and understood with the Park Ave/Appleton issue. Jeff noted that volumes are lower now because of the pandemic and the issue is not as pressing.

Joe Solomon, who lives near the nursing home on Park Avenue, asked if the TAC has looked at trying to divert Appleton Street traffic to Florence Street, where there already is a traffic light. Corey replied that Appleton Street is a major collector, whereas Florence is not.

10. Crosswalk on Academy St. at Maple St. (Corey Rateau)

Corey reported that nothing is happening there now and only one formal complaint has been received. Perhaps once the Senior Center remodeling is completed with more on-site parking, the problem may be resolved.

11. Mass Ave Crosswalks at Water Street, Town Hall, and Academy Street (Wayne Chouinard, Corey Rateau).

Muise noted that Dan Amstutz did counts of the crossing at Town Hall as part of the ABAC manual count in June. TAC also has counts from the Water St. crossing from a previous study at that location. There are no recent pedestrian counts at the Academy St. crosswalk. Scott said that we have some very old counts at Academy and said that based on his informal observation, there are about as many crossings at Academy as at Town Hall.

Corey noted that mail-in ballots may also affect counts. Water St. probably has higher counts during normal times because of the library. There has been a suggestion to construct bump-outs but Howard added that there is no money right now for Phase 2 Mass Ave. improvements. There has been no serious consideration of this concept to date because of various issues. The current crosswalk has a kitty corner alignment from one side of Water St. to the library. Corey noted that a bump-out on the south side of Mass Ave could affect the bus stop east of Spengler Way.

12. Additional Issues.

Len Diggins asked a question on behalf of Paul Schlichtman. He wanted to know if the work on the signal at the Summer St. intersection at Mystic St. would include a northbound left-turn green arrow. Wayne responded that the DPW is just changing the signal cabinet. State permission would be required to provide a new left-turn signal phase. New cabinets will allow for adaptive technology and the left-turn phase could be provided in the future with the new cabinet.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.